

Does Your Extended Family Or Ex Partner Support You?



These are the raw responses of home educators in the HE UK forum who responded to the above question. Most extended families were supportive, but in a minority of cases families were unsupportive of the decision to the extent that they took action. Occasionally that action was destructive of family relationships.

There is a tendency for extended families to become at least more accepting and even actively encouraging as they see improvement over time.

Although my mother approves of home education, she certainly does not approve of autonomous methods that I have adopted - she would prefer to see school at home set up. Rest of family more or less disapproves

I would not say they approve. His parental grandparents are openly sceptical and frequently mention getting him back to school. My own family are a mixture of "it's none of our business but are you sure you are doing the right thing" and "its fine for primary but you will see sense for high school" with a tiny smidgeon of "you go, girl".

Dad of youngest son is supportive and has done things like pay for educational resources for both children.

Extended: not really. They all agreed the way school was behaving was dreadful, and were supportive at first, but some members (those with schooled children mainly) now seem to think home ed (especially autonomous style) is even worse. An attitude that we should have stayed and fought, rather than gone our own reckless way.

Ex-partner: One ex has colluded with the LEA officer, when I was refusing to meet with him at my home and arguing the toss over his "duty to monitor" etc. and took me to court citing educational provision as evidence of my irresponsible attitude to parenting. He backed down when I (on the advice of my ill-informed solicitor) met with the EWO and no SAO was applied for, on the (HIS only actually) understanding that monitoring would reassure Ex that a 'suitable' education was taking place. He still doesn't believe it though. D is under constant pressure to go back to school 'like a good girl' and being told it's the only way to get a job, being bribed to 'do some maths' so they can test her etc. Lots of 'what on earth does that woman teach you' etc comments. My other ex was never told. OD's decision and he was never interested enough to ask anyway. She has now started college.

We have a varied response. Some do, some are frightened by our independence.

2 (grandparents) don't because they do not accept any alternative to school as a learning mechanism. 3 others do.

They are not unsupportive but uninformed and slightly concerned. Generally, have positive view of our judgement and abilities. Some members are uninterested or preoccupied with their own difficulties

Yes - they have seen the results (academic and personality) and are impressed

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Ex-partner: He does not approve and has taken court action in an attempt to force me to return the children to school. His action failed because the LEA was on MY side!

Yes. They can see the results (i.e. children happier, more confident, and relating more easily to adults...)

Slightly more concerned post 11 than they have been so far

Yes. Those who know my child best approve wholeheartedly, especially when they see the difference it has made to his behaviour.

Father's side - no real comment but radiate disapproval dressed up as worry. Mothers side - very supportive, take an active part in the education

Yes - they do now.

To begin with they were sceptical but over the years they have been able to see how well the children are developing as free thinking individuals.

Mostly no (her parents), some vague approval (his father), some hostility (selection of his siblings), some understanding of why (some of the teachers amongst his siblings)

Yes. Both sets of grandparents are supportive and have been from the early days. One set of grandparents were teachers and think we are doing a much better job than a school. One set is supportive, but would prefer us to send them to school - to be normal.

Some do, some haven't given an opinion-but I think disapprove. Some disapprove strongly - through ignorance of home-ed.

Woman's mother reported us to Social Services. Woman's father dubious but leaving us alone. Man's parents occasionally comment but do not push any particular points other than obtaining legal facts from Man's sister who is a classroom assistant and knows nothing of the laws of HE.

Yes. Had very few questions from them, mainly concerned with the legality of the situation, but no hint of disapproval from any family or friends.

Extended: Grandparents are supportive, although I don't think they totally understand our ed. Phil. Maternal grandfather is chair of governors of the school from which my son was withdrawn. I am delighted to say he is encouraging, and reports that son's former teachers were quite positive about the move.

Ex-partner: (NB I am married to someone other than my son's father, therefore not single per se.) Son's father was sceptical at first & would give son a hard time about it when he visited. He apparently did not feel strongly enough about it to need to discuss his concerns with me. When son reported that he did not like his father's attitude re HE I pointed out to my ex. That his actions were likely to make son want to not visit. The negative comments then stopped.

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Some do some don't. Relationship broken down with one close relative. Disapproval from 2 others. Support from rest.

Ambiguous reactions. No outright hostility but ongoing concerns.

Yes - not at first, but through my continually showing research and stats under noses, they now agree with my thinking.

Yes on the whole after seeing the problems we were having and the positive results after we had started home educating. Most of the older generation in our family agree that the education system leaves a lot to be desired.

Extended: My sisters are both supportive, my mother thinks all children should be in school.

Ex-partner: I am remarried rather than single, but my ex has ambiguous views as to HE. He believes school is best in general, but has accepted that the boys are happier learning at home.

Broadly the maternal extended family approve as they saw how unhappy the children were in school. They are beginning to see an improvement in the children's self confidence and are expressing more approval.

YES. Thought I would meet with disapproval. Surprisingly this was not the case. Total agreement as it was obvious school was not the answer for my child.

It's taken time but my sister is very supportive indeed. I had to put my eldest in school when he was 4 as my husband had a heart attack and I just couldn't cope at the time. I took him out after just 3 months after seeing the negative effects schooling had on him. My family, mother, brothers etc are more understanding now than they were before. My sister suddenly realised what I had been going on about for the last couple of years re: home ed.

We have little extended family nearby. Grandparents are concerned, one uncle is impressed. :)

Yes - help from mother and some extended family

Don't think they feel that the children receive a very "academic" education and have concerns as to the disadvantages that may occur later in life

At first there was considerable resistance (it's not normal!) But once they were able to see the advantages they acquiesced.

Yes - can easily see the advantages academically, initially were worried about 'socialisation' not any more though, our children are very happy & well balanced. I (mum) gave up a professional career to HE & this still results in raised eyebrows!

Not especially. Neither side understand education that is not highly structured, and worry about the age appropriateness of activities. Mother's side very focused on testing Father's

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side very concerned about 'fitting in' both sides are unhappy that HE is likely to be a long term activity, both side would prefer boys went to school for junior years if not before.

Maternal family broadly approve as they saw how unhappy eldest child was at school.- Thought we have gone a little to far, maybe, but coming round now. Paternal family always approve of anything anti-establishment!

Yes, even my mum in law (senior child protection social worker) can see the benefits HE has for our son

NO! My brothers and sister think we are selfish, that we are opting out of parenting and our children will turn into geeks :-) My mother does not contact us. My step children think it is cool (18 and 21), my husbands sister and himself never talk about it.

Yes, they can see a big difference in our son already - happier, learning, more sociable, etc

Extended: difficult one i have never really asked them wether they approve or not I get the impression that a couple of people disapprove but would never dream of saying so or interfering in anyway and I am sure they would offer support if we asked for it.

Ex-partner: I do not count myself as a single parent as i am remarried but we r still in contact with the 3 (incl the 2 who r HE) of the boys father tho i am not sure he approves, to disapprove would require him to be more pro active in their lives than he is willing to be. I hope that makes sense

They have doubts about the way I approach home education. They would see school at home as preferable to the relaxed way we go about education.

Varies from tolerance (father's parents) to admiration (maother's friends) thro questioning (mother's teaching qualified sibling)

Yes because of the bad atmosphere of todays youth

Mostly no, my mother however is very supportive and interested.

Some do, other's don't. Fears have to do with qualifications/exams and job prospects.

For the most part they are either quietly supportive or just don't bring it up. Expressed surprise when our 7 yr old learned to read pretty much on his own, but they seem to be feeling more confident about it as they watch him learn and see how well H.E. suits him.

Yes and NO. Think we should be providing school at home. Approve of idea of home education as school at home, disapprove of autonomous education.

Mostly! They had there misgivings at first, but on the whole have come round. My mother actually helps me with ds's education now.

Parents very much - they extol HE to anyone who will listen. Siblings don't approve at all, and I think feel threatened.

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All in favour. Only one member who thought we had no right to remove them from school, and should extend their education after school if we were not happy with their progress.

Yes, absolutely. Younger son was getting very introvert & 2 stone over weight. Now outgoing confident & within correct height weight ratio

Yes. Provided solution to major health and wellbeing problem - our son's physical health dramatically improved once we withdrew him from school

DH's approve but live a long way off so are not involved in any way. Massive support from friends and neighbours though, most of them are teachers!

My mother is a teacher and strongly approves of the socialising aspect of schools. Our children are not yet of compulsory school age, so she feels she has the time to change our minds. She sees home education as extremely damaging for the children's mental health and is rather concerned. My father respects that it is our decision and understands our reasons. However he is anxious that we create situations in which the kids can socialise. He spent most of his schooldays playing truant and instead visited galleries and museums and is quite enthusiastic about teaching them about art, history and literature. Their uncle has strong objections to the School system, and is all for home education.

They neither approve nor disapprove. They know me too well to try to influence me against something I feel so strongly about!

Not really. When I first told mother in law that we would home ed her response was 'How are you going to teach him & look after the other two?' I think she had visions of me at the blackboard & breastfeeding the baby and chasing after a toddler at the same time. They 'accept' now but still don't understand. My sister in law says 'your mad - you don't know how good school is now it's not like it was in our day' I let her ramble. She 'won't' understand.

Extended: nope; my lot go very quiet, exchange 'looks' if education or school or our various activities are mentioned; generally avoid mentioning school or education in our company.

Ex-partner: Father and his family disapprove despite frequent friendly attempts by me to give them a clear idea of how HE can work/ loan of books, articles, philosophy etc. Put pressure on child to go to school like a 'good' /'normal' child. Cite HE as evidence that I am a bad parent and all my 'ideas' are irresponsible whenever ANY disagreement occurs re-education or life in general. Still insist she cannot possibly learn anything outside school despite the fact that child has taught herself to read without any intervention by me (except when asked).

Extended: one side of the family approve the other do not but at the end of the day they are our children

Yes. My father agrees that if they are not happy at school & worrying whether they are going to be bullied at break time etc., then they would be better educated at home.

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They were sceptical at first and most only seem to tolerate it as OK because the children appear intelligent and happy. Some can't understand why we wouldn't choose private highly academic education to give the children the best chance in life. One (with a 2yr old) is a recent "convert". Many see it as another "quirk" to go with the vegetarianism, homoeopathic medicine and acupuncture, meditation, mixed marriage, etc that they find unorthodox about our family"

Yes! Maternal grandfather is a teacher; maternal grandmother is a school psychologist.

TEPID SUPPORT WHEN WE STARTED - BIGGER OPPOSITION AND QUESTIONING NOW THAT WE HAVE DECIDED TO CARRY ON... ALL WAY THROUGH

My husbands family are Arabs and as such have not really heard of home educating, they are dubious at the moment but are starting to see the benefits of home education in that my children are doing things that other children of the same age within the family cannot do.

Yes they have always been supportive, they include several teachers

NO! Maternal grandmother has 'traditional' views on parenting ie. Children should do as they are told and go to school without complaint. Paternal grandparents barely even regard children as people with rights of their own and have trouble grasping even the concept of HE

Yes. Nobody has shown disapproval. Children's only living grandparent very positive about HE.

Yes, although just lately one member has said she has concerns over their future, which as their mother I don't share.

Ex-partner: Not really. She would do if we were still together but disapproves as she will have little input!

Father is very unsupportive and says I am not qualified to be a teacher. Mother accepts in principle other family members just think we are nuts!

No support what so ever. Because I was put in a school for so many years no one knows I exist. My parents had left me there since I was young... Everyone needs 'educating'.

Ex-partner: My Ex approved and thought the children were very mature for their age and learning well, until he read some of the threatening letters sent to me by the LEA and suddenly now he is frightened and thinks I should put them in school and avoid going to court.

My husbands mother thinks it's the best thing I've done, on the other hand my sister and other members of my family are in disagreement, they say school is a must.

Some approve, in particular grandma, uncle and aunt are openly pleased that children aren't in school. However, most just say nothing rather than actively approve/disapprove.

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Her parents, sister and brother strongly approve

His parents are coming round to the idea due seeing the positive results

Yes, now as they can see that she is happy, settled and making progress.

No. Neither set of families approves.(Lots of teachers both sides!) But generally don't interfere except to ask worried questions about the future from time to time- job prospects, lack of qualifications etc.,etc.

Yes. They are all very supportive. They understand our concerns about a school environment and take enormous pleasure and pride in watching her develop into a bright, enthusiastic little person. Her maternal grandfather is particularly proud of both his daughter and grand-daughter.

To a certain degree until the association issue pops up now and again, and then we get a few comments about ds not having a lot of association.

Didn't to begin with, but do now as they've seen the children grow and flourish. Regular comments now on what pleasant, adaptable children they are, and bright. What a good job they never went is another comment we hear now.

Yes, at first they thought we were mad but have now come round and all help.

Extended: Yes verbally supportive - but very little active practical involvement as their own children are schooled and they seem to have forgotten / not acquired / no confidence in their own skills to educate: (i.e the only time they read a story to a child is when mine visit armed with their favourite book and pester them to read it to them) Otherwise anything touching on learning is regarded as being a schools responsibility not theirs.

Ex-partner: Surprisingly fully supportive - even to the point of financially contributing to education related costs! - he had a very negative experience of school and has a low opinion (albeit a realistic one ;o) of the current system - and recognises the potential damage school can cause to the child's "desire" to learn / self-esteem / anti-social skills acquired in schools ;o)

Yes, they are very supportive and often help out as well as friends. Everyone we have met so far have thought it was a great idea and no one has told me they should be in school (apart from their ex teachers)

NO. My mother believes that my son is missing out on school life!!! And not socialising with people of his own age.

Yes - they have been convinced by the children's obvious development, skills and knowledge. One set of grandparents actively help one day most weeks; the others contribute with books or cds. My brother & sister-in-law are curious about home education but appear convinced that it works for our children!

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Ex-partner: yes - believes I have child's best interests at heart, also comes from a very different culture so has a limited understanding of how the British education system works so leaves decision making to myself.

Some were shocked, especially traditional Italian side who see formal education as the only way to get on. My mum, an ex-primary inspector, worked closely with home educators in Wiltshire in the 1970s and has been very supportive - and works with our son one day a week.

Mother's mum and sister approve, her dad and his side of family think it's odd and we should have to follow NC and have the common concerns about legality and socialisation. Father's parents don't like it but don't mention it.

Yes most definitely, the difference in him has been noticed by all involved with Greg, including close family and friends

Yes, in the main. Especially since hearing more positive things.

Generally supportive but with reservations. Worry about missing out, socialisation, exams, etc.

Mostly, my mum is rather anxious, mostly about socialisation, though a recent 'timetable' I sent to her may have mitigated this to some extent. My dad is positive, my in-laws don't seem that interested :(, but aren't overtly negative.

Not all family members are convinced it is the best option but they all support the decision.

Yes as we have had home education on both sides.

One set of grandparents approves and the other set just don't refer to it at all. Everyone else is quite interested.

Now, paternal grandparents and aunts and uncles are very positive. The jury is still out with maternal grandparents. One aunt is seriously considering home-ed. One uncle is politely against. (We have a large support network of friends. A few approve, but send their children to school. The rest are divided into those against and those who are home-educating.)

There is a gradual improvement in understanding as time goes by, but the feelings of the extended family on this matter are still pretty equivocal.

Some do some don't, only one has been really strongly against it.

My family agree with what i am doing. But my children's fathers' side do not

Not whole heartedly, although the results of our home educating are beginning to convince people. Don't get so many comments such as "you must put them back in Scholl some time".

Very mixed. Those with children in the system are defensive of it, one is a teacher and can't understand our position. Approval is growing as they see the success of HE.

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Grandparents approve now after initial concerns. Other family members vary from fully supportive to quietly disapproving

Some members struggled at first but we tried to answer all their concerns and they see how rounded the children are so they don't have the worries they had 6 or 7 years ago.

To a point but they keep asking when he is going to return to education at a new school.

Not really - sister-in-law is a teacher. Both she and Grandmother thought HE would fail the children but I think they have been somewhat surprised.

Ex agrees subject to annual reports

Extended: Approved with dyslexic son; very disapproving of younger "normal" son doing it too, though. Ex-partner: Very supportive generally, but no 'hands on' help with education and was very disappointed that younger son was taken out of school.

Not really. Father of child still not openly accepting home schooling, as we are not doing traditional school work or school hours. His sister feels it is wrong thing to do, feels our daughter will miss out on activities for her age.

Not at first, because he felt isolation would be a problem. He is ok with it now though.

Partially. My mother is very supportive (& does some educating with my daughter) but wishes we were more structured. My brother is very against the whole concept of home education.

Not necessarily fully approved but always supported

Yes they approve as they know I am very capable of giving him a very good education as I home edded myself.

Everyone seemed to have the same concerns at first but once they listened to our reasons and realised we had made a decision they are all very supportive. Most say they agree it must be the very best way to educate a child.

Some approve, some think it is temporary and dd needs to get to grips with the situation

Yes. We had very bad school problems with my young brother - years later he revealed that a teacher was sexually abusing him and my parents deeply regret not knowing alternatives and forcing him to school. My MIL just goes along with it.

Not entirely - some conflict because they don't understand and tend to judge by the things that aren't being taught rather than the amazing and exiting things that are being learned.

Ex-partner: Doesn't seem to be able to make up his mind about it. Approves when it suits him and disapproves at other times.

Yes, especially those who are/have been in the teaching profession.

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Yes were all too aware of the difficulties faced by sen child and difficulty trying to get acknowledgement and support

Ex-partner: Yes, he helps and is here every weekend and will help in the week if absolute necessary

Doubtful at first. Now happy, but with occasional comments of 'how long do you think you'll cope?'

No - my mother insists we (the parents) will be imprisoned, and our children are being deprived of their future. Other family members are not so hostile - but are not at all supportive.

They remain undecided but seem impressed with how the children are but concerned about reading and writing!!

Wary but generally positive feedback from extended family members.